

Public Art NEXT!

San José's New Public Art Master Plan

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About This Report

This Executive Summary summarizes the main elements of *Public Art NEXT!*, the recommended update to San José's existing Public Art Master Plan, which was adopted in 2001. This new Public Art Master Plan is intended to guide San José's Public Art Program over the next five years.

This Executive Summary, and the accompanying Complete Report, are provided for review by the general public, the Arts Commission and, ultimately, by the City Council. The Complete Report—which details findings, recommendations, and the outreach and consultation process used to create the report—is available at www.sanJoseculture.org/pub_art.

Public Art NEXT! was created through a process that integrated national expertise, local expertise, stakeholder consultation, and research. The planning team—led by urban designer Todd Bressi and public art consultant Meridith McKinley—worked for a year with Public Art Program staff and stakeholders in city government, the art and business communities and the community at large.

The team conferred extensively with the San José Arts Commission's Public Art Committee, and with a broad-based, 41-member Steering Committee assembled specifically for this process (see Appendix A). The planning team conducted interviews, held community focus groups, observed community public art meetings, interacted with City staff and studied San José's key documents and future development plans.

A specific charge given to the planning team was to address issues identified by the 2005 City Auditor's review of the Public Art Program.

Why A New Master Plan Now?

San José boasts one of the most established public art programs in the country, and one of the nation's largest and most diverse public art collections (over 200 artworks in 85 locations). For many years, San José's Public Art Program has been regarded within its field as a national leader.

Over its 22-year history, the program has evolved significantly—focusing initially on major commissions Downtown, then more recently on projects in community facilities throughout the city. Recent artworks at libraries, parks and City Hall are among the program's finest accomplishments.

At the same time, the program faces challenges: declining funding (as bond projects are completed and public infrastructure is financed increasingly through public-private partnerships), a community involvement process that is cumbersome and yields uneven results, and funding mechanisms that restrict public art investments. Perhaps most important, involved residents, city leaders and experts see strong opportunity for public art to play a more powerful role in shaping the identity and experience of the city. By aligning public art with the next-generation of design and development in San José, San José can lead in making public art a recognizable asset that strengthens the city as an attractive place to live, work, learn, play and visit.

What This Plan Provides

Public Art NEXT!, addresses the challenges and opportunities, and charts a course for the next generation of public art in San José. The plan:

- *What.* Establishes a bold vision of public art that embraces San José/Silicon Valley's innovative attitude and becomes a proactive contributor to the design of public places;
- *Where.* Identifies geographic priorities for focusing resources in high-traffic, high-visibility locations -- from a reinvigorated Downtown to a new urban corridor in North San José; from community gathering places to the planning of new communities;
- *How.* Recommends the planning, funding and decision-making processes that are necessary to achieve the vision.

Public Art NEXT! provides a fresh look at how San José's Public Art Program contributes to and operates in the context of an evolving and dynamic city.

Key Findings From Research and Outreach

Bold, Destination-Quality Artworks Desired. There is a desire for public art in San José that is bold, innovative and risk-taking, and for destination-quality artworks in strategic locations.

1. *Limited Impact on City Image and Pride.* San José's public art is "nationally known, but locally unknown." Public art does not yet have a strong enough visual impact in San José to affect people's experience of the city and to engender community recognition and pride.
2. *"Percent for Art" Leads to Reactive, Site-Specific Approach.* The traditional Percent for Art financing strategy links public art expenditures to specific capital projects as they come along. This limits the program from proactively planning to locate artworks in areas that have the most visible impact.
3. *Inconsistency Across Departments.* City departments interpret public art funding requirements in an inconsistent way, and do not always involve public art staff early enough in their capital project planning process to create projects with impact.
4. *Funding Fall-Off Imminent.* With the completion of current bond programs, the Public Art Program faces a substantial drop-off in project funding. Moreover, the current public art ordinance did not contemplate a time when public infrastructure would be funded through public-private partnerships, such as development fees, financing districts, and turnkey arrangements, rather than public capital budgets.
5. *Public Art Not At Table for Urban Design.* The Public Art Program is not fully engaged in helping to shape and implement the City's urban design visions in Downtown, North San José, or the Strong Neighborhood Initiative program.
6. *Stakeholder Roles Need Clarification.* Public art stakeholders do not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the process of conceptualizing projects, selecting artists and reviewing designs. As a result, the commissioning and review process is time-consuming and does not always produce the desired aesthetic outcomes.
7. *Artworks Falling Into Disrepair.* Conservation and maintenance of San José's existing public art collection is a pressing issue; artworks are falling into disrepair.

8. *Collaborative Relationships Growing.* The Public Art Program has developed significant assets that can be used for the future: constructive relationships with a range of City departments and agencies and the VTA, a community of resident advocates and artists who are highly supportive of the Public Art Program and a track record of accomplishment on recent bond projects.

Recommendations

As San José moves toward new visions for how it will grow, the Public Art Program must adapt so that it can play a strong, pro-active role in shaping the visual environment. The master plan recommends *priorities* for the Public Art Program over the next five years, *planning* and *funding strategies* to help it move forward and *public review and approval processes* that involve stakeholders appropriately.

Vision

San José's Public Art Program must promote a bold vision that exemplifies the City's creativity and energy. The program should be a proactive force in the design of public environments, particularly in high traffic, high visibility places.

1. Prioritize innovative public art in three regional destination areas: Downtown, North San José, Airport.
 - Create Public Art Focus Plans for Downtown and North San José that identify target locations for artwork and a range of public art project types including iconic destination artworks, artworks that reinforce urban infrastructure, and temporary artwork installations.
 - Continue to implement the Art & Technology program at Mineta San José International Airport to reinforce San José's identity as a global leader in innovation and creativity.
2. Incorporate public art in high-traffic transportation corridors and pedestrian areas.
 - Place public art at transportation hubs; pedestrian, bike and transit improvements in pedestrian priority areas.
 - Encourage the inclusion of public art at VTA and BART stations.
 - Integrate a broad range of art projects in the trail network to connect neighborhoods and bring people closer to nature.
3. Continue to create projects in community-gathering places.
 - Complete public art projects associated with bond-funded park, library, community facility and public safety projects.
 - Cultivate community-based art projects that support neighborhood revitalization goals.
4. Integrate public art in long-term planning initiatives.
 - Collaborate with Coyote Valley planners and other planned development to refine vision, funding and implementation mechanisms for public art.

5. Establish ongoing, collaborative planning relationships with other City departments and the Redevelopment Agency to insure that the Public Art Program aligns with their plans.
 - Involve Public Art Program staff, arts and design professionals on planning teams to closely align the Public Art Program with City-sponsored urban design and planning efforts from departmental-wide efforts to General Plan revisions.
6. Encourage private financial participation in public art, beginning with Downtown and North San José.
 - Include One Percent for Art on all San José Redevelopment-assisted private developments.
 - Create an incentive for developers to contribute to a public art pool to implement iconic public art projects that reinforce urban design.
 - Explore the expansion of public art into private partnership projects outside Redevelopment areas
 - Establish creative partnerships with the cultural, digital design and business communities.
7. Clarify the ground rules for funding public art projects and apply them equally across the board, building in more flexibility for how funds can be allocated and exploring the expansion of public art to private development in major growth areas.
 - Make the policies for determining which capital projects are required to include public art more explicit and detailed.
 - Explore new approaches to including public art in the design of affordable housing projects.
8. Establish a project oversight process that involves a broader range of stakeholders and clarifies each stakeholder's role in the decision-making process.
 - Develop a community engagement process for each project to introduce the artist and project to the community being served.
 - Include a core team of stakeholders in the planning, artist selection and concept design stage of each project.
 - Involve the Arts Commission in high-level discussions about public art policy issues, bi-annual work plans and focus plans.
 - Authorize the Public Art Committee rather than the Arts Commission as a whole to provide recommendations regarding design and contracting issues.
9. Create new operating funds to support a higher level of public art maintenance, public outreach and education.